

National Conference spotlights entrepreneurship

ASPIRA is taking the lead in building a new kind of Latino leader with its Second Annual Conference, "Empowering Communities through Entrepreneurship and Technology." The Conference taking place October 8-10 in Washington, DC casts a long-term ASPIRA goal, community empowerment, in a new light.

"The true empowerment of our inner city communities will be achieved only if we can finally break the bonds of decades of dependence and generate our own wealth," said ASPIRA President and CEO Ronald Blackburn-Moreno. "This demands a new

leadership, a generation of entrepreneurs who develop their own businesses, climb the corporate ladder to create wealth in and for our communities, and commit themselves to the community."

In keeping with ASPIRA's status as a community-based youth organization, the conference workshops and panels are focusing on two often overlooked strands in the national movement to develop small businesses—Non-Profit Entrepreneurship and Youth Entrepreneurship.

"Our non-profit service organizations need to become self-reliant, generating our own income

to sustain ourselves and expand our services," Blackburn-Moreno noted. "And it is through preparing our youth for self-dependence and the corresponding utilization of new technologies that we prepare them for a bright future."

ASPIRA sees technology as the center of the new entrepreneurial frontier, and it is showcased at the conference in both exhibitions and workshop sessions. Everything from model programs to hands-on skill-building sessions are being offered to Latinos gathered for the Conference from across the country.

continued on p. 4

APEX achievements continue to be recognized

The ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX) program continues to be recognized as a national model for parental involvement. Look for information about the program to appear in a fall issue of *Latina* magazine. Over 1000 parents have graduated from the DeWitt Wallace-funded program since its inception in Philadelphia and Chicago in 1992.

The Philadelphia school system started this year with a pledge to APEX of \$3000 for parent workshops. Meanwhile, Chicago parents have formed a Parent Federation to advocate for their children's education. The APEX program is now offered in three additional cities—New York, New York, and Rio Piedras—while continued expansion is expected to reach Miami and Bridgeport.

A proud parent from Chicago receives her APEX certificate at the ASPIRA graduation ceremony.



President's Corner

The approach of the 21st century makes me ask about the future of our country, of our communities, and especially, of our youth. It is a world of highly sophisticated technologies and increasingly interdependent world markets, where we will need skills for jobs that do not even exist yet. My thoughts about this "brave new world" we are already entering convince me that we must provide all our children not only with a quality education, but with a radically new type of education that will develop new skills and new ways of thinking. I question whether the new century, the new wealth created by new technology, will merely bring greater disparities between those who have access to these technologies, the skills to use them, and the benefits they produce, and those who do not.

Education is the key to eradicating the disparities that have plagued us, because it is education that will give us the access to new technologies. Education is the critical element in raising our communities, especially our low-income, inner-city communities, out of the grasp of poverty, drugs, violence, and hopelessness.

What is this new education? The first major trend I see is the setting of new, higher standards for education. Students will be expected to perform at very high levels in science, mathematics, reading comprehension, and writing. Moreover, teachers will be expected to master and use sophisticated technologies in the classroom and to have a better mastery of their field.

Second, higher standards will require new ways of knowing what students know and are able to do. They will require new and different types of tests.

Where are we today relative to these new trends? We know that an increasing proportion of the highly sophisticated workforce of the 21st century will have to come from the Hispanic community. So where do our Hispanic youth stand today?

Do we have the technology? Do we have the will?

Hispanics have the highest dropout rate and lowest school completion rate of any group in the country except Native Americans. If this trend continues, of the 5.1 million Hispanic students in school today, 2.1 million will not be prepared for tomorrow's workforce. College attendance rates by Hispanic students have actually declined over the past fourteen years, and they make up only four percent of the students in four-year universities. Poverty, segregation, grade retention, low expectations, fear of violence, lack of bilingual programs, lack of role models, low parental involvement—all of these lead to the low academic achievement of our students.

So I wonder, will our children have access to the education and the resources that will allow them to reach the high standards? To do well on the new tests? It hardly seems likely.

This, then, is our challenge. What does it require? In one word, advocacy. It requires that students, teachers, parents, community members, and organizations raise their voices and demand the rights of every child to a solid, quality education.

Advocacy requires, first and foremost, a commitment to our children and our community. But advocacy also requires knowledge. It requires that we know what a good education is, what should be happening in a classroom, and what our children should be exposed to. Finally, advocacy requires unity. Only together will we be effective advocates for our children and our community.

I am often asked whether I am optimistic regarding the future of our low-income Latino children. The road to the 21st century, with all the marvels and magnificence it promises, will be for us a difficult one. But one look at our young people and the leadership potential that I see in each one, and one look at how our communities are coming together, makes me optimistic. With the commitment and involvement of all of us, we will reap the benefits that this new millennium promises. We cannot afford not to.

ASPIRA's youth, tolerance work honored

ASPIRA of New York was one of four community organizations recognized at the Bridge to Brotherhood inaugural dinner, an effort to unite disparate communities in New York City to promote tolerance and understanding.

As noted in its program, Bridge to Brotherhood was honor-

ing these groups not for "what they have in common as minorities but as humanitarians. The shared agenda is the strengthening of education and social welfare." Proceeds from the \$500-a-plate, black tie event were earmarked for special programs by the four agencies.

Summer excitement in the South Bronx

Aspirantes from ASPIRA of New York's Project B.E.A.M. produced a bilingual, illustrated newsletter dedicated, as they said, to "the fresh breeze blowing through the South Bronx this summer." In it they recorded their adventures in science, health, leadership, literature, sports, and recreation. One page described in text and drawings the educational skit on asthma produced and performed by the Leadership Academy. Another page described a trip to the Hall of Science, which made participant Jeff Hollington reflect, "Science is kind of cool and I like it the best because it's nice and hard."

Project B.E.A.M. is an alternative school run by ASPIRA of New York under the Beacon Schools initiative. It provides a sound, full-time academic program to students who have dropped out of school or are at risk of doing so,

Focus on Florida

Summer was a busy time for the ever-busy ASPIRA of Florida. Its Broward County division held its first family forum in August, on the theme "Working Together Toward a Better Tomorrow... Youngsters Taking the Lead." Over sixty parent participants enjoyed short skits on social issues written and performed by Aspirantes from area middle and high schools. They also received information on drug abuse, gang awareness, and counseling services from a panel of community professionals.

The ASPIRA South division engaged youth in landscaping the grounds of its alternative school, Accolade South, with a botanical garden. Aspirantes sketched original designs for the garden, conducted research on different types of plants, chose the plants, surveyed the land, and planted trees. ASPIRA South is continuing to grow into the 1997-98 school year with the addition to Accolade South of the ninth grade.

continued on p. 4

Calling all Alumni

ASPIRA of Illinois is looking for alumni of its programs to help it celebrate its 30th Anniversary in a gala event scheduled for September, 1998. Contact Guadalupe Martínez at the Illinois office at 773-252-0970, or write to 2435 N. Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647 to join in the festivities.

Illinois high school graduates thirty-four Majority head for college

ASPIRA of Illinois' alternative school, named Antonia Pantoja High School after ASPIRA's founder, saw 34 of its students graduate in a June ceremony. Pantoja herself gave the commencement address.

The High School is accredited by the Chicago Public School system to serve students who have dropped out of regular school programs. As a clear sign of its success, 56% of the graduates this year had plans to attend college.



Students in ASPIRA of Florida's Broward County program attend the Tri-County ACF Leadership Retreat.

NHLA releases report card on Latino appointments

--Administration receives a 'C'

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), chaired by ASPIRA President and CEO Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, gave President Clinton a "C" on the appointment of Hispanics to political positions during his second term in office.

In its most recent *Report Card on Hispanic Presidential Appointments*, released on July 29, the NHLA found that only seven percent of political appointees in the fourteen cabinet agencies are Hispanic. There has been virtually no change in the representation of Hispanics in political positions since the NHLA released its last *Report Card* in October 1994.

The NHLA, a coalition of the nation's most prominent Latino organizations and individuals, concluded that after four and one-half years, the President still has not delivered on his promise to have an administration that "looks like America." The President has announced, nominated, or appointed only 140 Hispanics of the 1,850 political positions in cabinet agencies.

At a press conference covered by *The Washington Post*, Univision, Telemundo, and other media, Blackburn-Moreno reminded the public, "It is of critical importance to have Hispanic political appointees at high levels in the federal government. Our community is not benefiting from the programs, services, and resources of the federal government because we have traditionally lacked access and representation when decisions are made."

He noted that this lack of representation was not due to lack of candidates. "In spite of the tremendous efforts of a broad-based coalition of Latino organizations and leaders to identify and submit hundreds of names of qualified candidates for political positions, we are still well behind."

"We have urged the President on various occasions to appoint more Hispanics. We have met with the White House staff. We are far from pleased with the results so far," he added.

The NHLA sets its benchmark for adequate representation of Hispanic appointees at 10%, roughly the proportion of Hispanics in the general population.

The NHLA plans to meet with all Cabinet secretaries during the fall.

W.K. Kellogg funds leadership program

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has provided \$187,000 over three years to continue efforts of the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program (APPLP) in Chicago, Miami, and New York. In its award letter, Kellogg noted that the funds are to be used "to develop academic and leadership skills for minority youth and encourage college enrollment." The goal of the APPLP is to prevent high school students from dropping out of school by developing their academic and leadership skills and fortifying their ambition to go to college.

Conference, cont. from p. 1

Keynote speaker and recipient of the 1996 Medal of Freedom Dr. Antonia Pantoja, founder of ASPIRA, shares her "Vision of New Leadership for Community Economic Development." Other scheduled speakers include House Leader Richard Gephardt, Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and John López, Chairman of the Board and CEO of López Foods, Inc.

Florida, cont. from p. 3

The Greater Miami and the Beaches division also engaged students' creativity over the summer. For the fifth year, Aspirantes aided in planning and implementing a mural in the Wynwood neighborhood. This year, the mural "Building the Future Today" now graces a wall of the Kidco child care center.

During July, the Antonia Pantoja Summer Youth Club of 13 young women attended a series of workshops and activities on topics such as money management, dating etiquette, and nutrition/fitness.

Twelve Aspirantes participated in the first National Conference of Puerto Rican Woman, held in Miami. Four of the twelve served as youth speakers.

APPLP Interns and Mentors 1997

Giannina Bastidas, Illinois, with Alfred Ramirez, Hand in Hand Parental Involvement Programs, The Institute for Educational Leadership

Arthur Freeman, New Jersey with Joyce Howard, Manager Business Information Center U.S. Small Business Administration

Aryany González, Florida, with Ida Castro, Director of Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor Hubert Kalinowski, New Jersey with Charles Rivera, Director of Public Affairs, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Aida López, Puerto Rico, with Yvette Ali, Hispanic Program Manager, National Transportation Safety Board

Orlando Lugo, Puerto Rico, with Túlío Díaz, Washington Field Office Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Daniel Martínez, New York, with Omar Guerrero, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Maziel Mejía, New York, with Carmen Delgado-Votaw, Director of Government Relations, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Paola Pagnanelli, Illinois, with Luis Gutiérrez, U.S. Representative José Pérez, Puerto Rico, with Ivonne Cervoni, Director for Special Projects, Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration

Rebekah Pérez, Pennsylvania, with Dan Chávez, Special Assistant, U.S. Department of Labor

Janet Ramirez, Illinois, with Arthur Cole, Director of School Improvement Programs, U.S. Department of Education

Ariseys Rolón, Pennsylvania, with Elisa Sánchez, President, MANA

Francisco Tavera, Florida, with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, U.S. Representative



APPLP National Interns perform "Lean on Me" at their graduation ceremony

Aspirantes work and learn in nation's capital

Does Puerto Rican statehood mean money out of your pocket? Will gender equity mean the end of *machismo* politics? Can your accent cost you your job? These were some of the issues under discussion by National Interns in the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program (APPLP) this summer.

The fourteen interns, Latino high school students from Florida, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico, spent July in Washington, DC, exploring firsthand the way decisions are reached in the nation's policy-making bodies. The interns were brought to the nation's capital under the sponsorship of Toyota Motor Sales USA after a year-long cycle of participation in their local APPLP leadership group.

The APPLP is a comprehensive program that includes local leadership seminars and community service internships as well as the national internships. Since 1986, it has brought 125 students to Washington for the prestigious internships.

"No group has a larger stake in the course of our nation between now and the year 2000 than Hispanic youth," said Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, ASPIRA President. "These youth are tomorrow's leaders."

To promote their leadership skills, interns not only debated issues and observed policy-making in progress, they also worked directly with key decision-makers in government and policy-related organizations. Mentors ranged from Luis Gutiérrez, U.S. Representative, to Aida Castro, Director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, to Carmen Delgado-Votaw, Director of Government Relations for the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

At the end of their internship, ASPIRA sponsored a reception and graduation ceremony. Always a major event in the ASPIRA calendar, the graduation this year was highlighted by a bilingual rendition of "Lean on Me" prepared and performed by the students themselves.

Happenings in National Health Careers

New York seeks to expand

After a recent trip to Washington, DC to attend the American Association of Medical College's 3000 by 2000 conference, ASPIRA National Health Careers Program counselor Jorge Torres was more convinced than ever of the need to increase recruitment and retention of minority health professionals.

"I was surprised to learn that, even with all our years of service, Puerto Ricans are still at the bottom of the pool of minorities entering health-related institutions," he said.

To address that need, ASPIRA of New York is developing a proposal to supplement its current program, in operation for over 25 years. The proposal will expand the work of the Health Careers Program to the lower grades, adding freshmen, sophomores, and juniors to the group of seniors and college students currently involved in activities designed to encourage and

assist them to enter health and allied health programs.

Upcoming conferences

ASPIRA of Illinois will hold its annual Health Careers Conference during the week of October 20. Meanwhile, ASPIRA of New York and ASPIRA of New Jersey are making plans for a joint Health Careers Conference to be held in January, 1998.

Students get taste of medicine

Miroslava Tixi and Joaquin Rosa, both high school students from ASPIRA of New Jersey, participated in the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's summer pre-med program.

Yamila Sterling, a student in the New York Health Careers Program, has been placed by ASPIRA as a volunteer at the Cornell School of Medicine.

TOPS expands Texas services

With a two-year grant from the Exxon Corporation, the ASPIRA Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students (TOPS) program began the new school year with expanded service to two schools in Houston and Corpus Christi. With TOPS sites also in San Antonio, this brings to five the participating Texas middle and high schools.

Each school will target a minimum of 25 students and their families for participation in the program, which establishes a support group for each youth participant. Families, school staff, and, in some instances, community volunteers come together with the students to work as a team on student goals for motivation and decision-making. The TOPS process not only helps students with their goals, it also brings families and schools closer together.

Summer science activities at the MAS Academies

Students at the ASPIRA Math and Science (MAS) Academies in Chicago and Miami spent much of the summer immersed in science. The MAS Academy is designed to introduce middle school students to science through hands-on activities. The students learn science the way scientists do: *by doing it*. The MAS Academies provide students with a new view into science away from the traditional textbook approach. In the process, of course, there is a lot of fun.

In Miami, groups of students visited the NASA space center, where they learned about space exploration and perused the space shuttle launch sites. These students also visited the Miami Museum of Science, where they took a trip to the beach guided by the museum and reported their findings in a short paper. Through a special series of taped interviews with minority scientists, the students were exposed to numerous career options.

In Chicago, teachers, tutors, and students met for intensive classes in earth science, biology, chemistry, physics, algebra, and other subjects. Students also visited museums and engaged as a class in the construction of a model space station.

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ASPIRA staff grows, changes

Executive VP named

As a result of a reorganization at the ASPIRA National Office, a new member has joined our family. Johnny Villamil-Casanova, a native of Manatí, Puerto Rico was hired as the new Executive Vice President. Among Mr. Villamil's responsibilities are the supervision and development of national programs, national office publications, and the incorporation of technology in ASPIRA's initiatives for information exchange, research, data acquisition and analysis, productivity, and as a teaching tool.

Mr. Villamil's academic background is in Environmental Science. He has a B.S. in Natural Sciences-Biology and a M.S. in Biology from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Before coming to ASPIRA, he worked with the U.S. Department of Energy in scientific research, with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Department of Natural Re-

sources in research, coastal zone planning and management, with Borjua Investments as Vice President for planning and government relations, and within several university systems as a Biology and Environmental Science instructor, Natural Sciences Department Chairman, Director of Programs and Curriculum Development, Science and Technology Associate Dean, Academic Dean, and Associate Dean for Instructional Resources.

Mr. Villamil, an accomplished author, has written textbooks for MacMillan Publishing and several scientific and educational research papers.

He is a welcome addition to the ASPIRA family.

Public Policy VP named

Hilda Crespo, formerly Director of Education and Federal Affairs, was named Vice President for Public Policy and Government

Relations. Within this role, she collaborates with federal agencies and other national and local organizations on public policy issues related to ASPIRA's work. Ms. Crespo, who has been with the ASPIRA National Office for over 14 years, has overseen several national education initiatives while serving on over 50 national boards and committees with Federal agencies and nonprofit organizations. She also has contributed to a number of ASPIRA publications and articles related to the education of the Latino community.

IL Acting Director chosen

José Rodríguez, Deputy Director of ASPIRA of Illinois, has been chosen by his Board of Directors to serve the Association as Acting Executive Director of the Illinois office. Rodríguez is a longtime member of the ASPIRA staff.

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